



Things You Can Do to Help Your Child's Communication

Lots of parents feel anxious before meeting with a speech and language therapist.

This leaflet suggests some things you can try with your child that will support their speech and language development.

Remember

If you speak more than one language, continue to use whichever feels more comfortable. Speaking additional languages is helpful to children, **not** harmful.



Technology can be useful (e.g. to practice learning about numbers, letters and favourite topics...) but **you** are the best person to teach your child to communicate. They will learn more language and communication skills from you than from a TV, phone or tablet.

Try daily **Special Time** with your child, it's a great way to help them develop their communication and interaction skills.

Special Time lasts for 5 minutes

Let your child choose the activity, toy or game

Find a place with no disruptions and remove obvious distractions such as the TV, iPad, or phone.

PLAY with your child for the full 5 minutes. Get down to their level to create the opportunity to be face to face, make eye contact and connect more easily. Give them your full attention.

When the 5 minutes is up tell them clearly that Special Time is finished.

NB: If you have other children it is a good idea to give them their own regular play time on an individual basis too.



Observe

Observe what your child is interested in

Wait

Wait for your child to initiate interactions

Listen/Look

Listen to your child's sounds and words. Look at their gestures/actions to help you understand what your child wants to talk about



Don't worry if you sometimes just sit silently with your child for five minutes or you might try out some of the following tips...

Top Tips to Help Your Child Use Language

Interpret what your child is trying to tell you—however they do it—actions, sounds etc. :

- * If they *pull your hand*, say the words for the thing they want e.g. “want **biscuit**?” “here you go... **biscuit**”
- * If they *bring you something*, say the name of it

Give your child a reason to communicate by

- * Pause (to give them a chance to communicate) before you give your child something they want.
- * Offer choices e.g. hold out 2 items. Some children find this easier if one of these is something they **don't** like!

Make more **comments** and ask less **questions**.

Keep your language simple - think about how many words your child uses (e.g. do they use one at a time...2 or 3 together?) and add just one more. e.g. *Your child says “man” you could say “man walking” or your child says “dog eat” you say “big dog eating”*

Speech Sounds

Speech sounds take time to develop and children make mistakes along the way. You can help them by:

- ✓ **Using the sounds in words correctly as part of natural conversation**
e.g. Look, a **car** ...ooh a red **car**. I like that **car**
- ✓ **Remembering that some errors are normal eg saying “tar” for “car” is common up to age 3 - 4.**
- ✗ **Try not to repeat back the incorrect sound to your child (say the correct version instead)** e.g. *your child says “a bid bird” you say “yes a big bird”*
- ✗ **Try not to exaggerate the sound—keep it natural!**

Useful links

General Speech and Language development and resources:

www.talkingpoint.org.uk

www.ican.org.uk/parents

Speech Sound Development:

www.mommyspeechtherapy.com

Stammering: www.stammering.org

Hearing: www.ndcs.org.uk

Autism: www.autism.org.uk

Please feel free to contact us for more advice:

Children's Speech and Language Therapy

Hollyfield House
22 Hollyfield Road
Surbiton
KT5 9AL

Tel: 020 8274 7814

Email: sltchildren@yourhealthcare.org